

THE MORNING AFTER:  
TRAUMA, MEMORY  
AND THE  
SIKH PREDICAMENT  
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*As the Indian army invaded Sikhs' most sacred shrine, the Golden Temple, Amritsar in June 1984, the community was shattered by the resulting trauma, reacting with anger, remorse and mourning. Having woven around itself certain myths, memories and commemorations of being survivors from past genocides, the 1984 tragedy, as a contemporary reality in postcolonial India offered bitter choices. With severely restricted agencies of representation and reproduction of Sikhs' traumatic grief and psychological pain suffered through broken ideals of a faith, undermining of historical traditions, and shattered memories – all symbolised through the destruction, construction and reconstruction of the Akal Takhat. With no prospect of an 'honourable' means of either forgetting or forgiving this 'critical event' the paper points towards the predicament of a community as it grapples to make sense of its recent past. Circumcised by the Indian state's coercion and hegemonic discourse, this paper identifies the reaction of individual Sikhs, its elite and political leaders highlighting some consequences of the tragedy, contest over interpretation, spaces for its mourning characterised by voluntary and enforced silences.*

### Introduction

The Indian army's attack in June 1984 on the Golden Temple, Amritsar, the most sacred centre of the Sikh religion, constituted one of the most traumatic experiences for the Sikh community. The destruction of the Akal Takhat and extensive damage to the whole complex of sacred buildings was felt by most Sikhs at the time as nothing less than a declaration of war on the community itself. As a reaction to the desecration of the Golden Temple, a Sikh resistance movement began against the Indian state in which over 80,000 Sikhs were killed by the security forces, while an even larger number of families suffered losses and indignities, and several thousand men were listed as 'disappeared'. After twenty-two years, hundreds are in prisons facing various charges. A tiny minority in the underground is committed to fight for independence. Sikhs have undergone a decade-long period of privations, sufferings and traumatization. The fallout of the Indian security forces' action on the Golden

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Temple and their subsequent excesses continue to haunt Sikh minds in many ways. Much of the Sikh reaction, though, has found no other expression but silence.

The repercussions of this tragedy have been far reaching, forcing a re-evaluation of the Sikh community's place in India, a restructuring of the community's traditions, institutions and organisations, more under duress, but some voluntarily, in a framework largely determined by a state bound by a different set of agendas. For the first time the Sikh community's future has drawn far more intensive debate within and without, including the pros and cons of an independent Sikh state.

As yet there are few documents and relatively little data with which to analyse various aspects of the tragedy. There are some official statements, a hastily compiled White Paper, and many accounts of the army operation in the Golden Temple. From the community side, there is just a reply to an official White Paper by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), some collections of cases of human rights violations, a few poetic and literary works and a small number of academic studies. The tragedy has not generated a proliferation of personal memoirs, nor have academics in any of Punjab's universities engaged in any systematic collection of personal testimonies. Three human rights organisations working in Punjab have some case studies. However, without reliable data, it is difficult even to quantify the sufferings, much less measure the psychological wounds. Significantly, there are no visual representations of sufferings, and the grief has found no memorials or monuments.

This article attempts a preliminary account of the sociological and psychological impact on the Sikh community of the army action in the Golden Temple.<sup>1</sup> It tries to build a narrative of the consequential traumatic conditions of many Sikh individuals and the community at large and how they have coped with the crisis. In particular, the article tries to explain several interrelated themes arising out of the 1984 tragedy. It accounts for the absence of memorials for the *Ghallughara* victims through the community's voluntary suppression of painful memories as also due to the state's censoring of any such presentation. It portrays how the tragedy led to the undermining of the Sikh tradition of *miri-piri* and *shahidi*, while *hukamnama* and *Sarbat Khalsa* became disputed terms. Finally, it offers some comments on the Sikh elite, especially its academics. This narrative is structured around a particular reading of the state-building process in post-colonial India which seems to have foreclosed the Sikh community's somewhat ambivalent search for autonomy. It argues that the army action which led to the destruction of Akal Takhat – a sacred building associated with the political imagining of the Sikhs – emerges as an almost logical, though not inevitable, outcome of the state's assertion of hegemonic control over all rival centres of power. The article draws together fragmented accounts of individual testimonies, alongside published and contested interpretations of events surrounding the traumatic episode. Obviously, if and when such testimonies can be assembled in sufficient numbers, a more meaningful and analytical work could ensue.

One need hardly labour an obvious point – that any account of Sikhs' traumatic experience is an inherently difficult subject to broach. Being both subjective and psychological, it is neither amenable to precise empirical inferences nor entirely capable of being rationally analysed. Ultimately, how Sikhs felt or continue to feel about the humiliating experience of the destruction, reconstruction and reconstitution of the Akal Takhat, and indeed the Golden Temple as a whole during June 1984, and about subsequent events, remains unfathomable. How individuals have coped

with its aftermath, loss of family members, brutal killings both by security forces and by militants, programmatic torture routines by police and security forces and village-wide humiliating searches, being subjected to community leaders' double-talk and to the blatant lies of the state, not to mention the sense of betrayal of a solemn trust in the Indian state, all comprise different layers of their traumatic experience.

### The Golden Temple: The making of a sacred site

*siq nwmu krqw purKu inrBau inrvYru Akwl mUriq AjUnl sYBM gur pRswid jpu*  
*Awid scu jugwid scu hY BI scu nwnk hosl BI scu*  
*Ik oan onkar*  
*satnam*  
*karta purkh.*  
*Nibhau nirvair*  
*akal murat*  
*ajuni saibhang gurprasad*  
*jap*  
*ad sach*  
*jugad sach*  
*hai bhi sach*  
*Nanak hosi bhi sach!*

With these spoken words which resonate on the water of the sacred pool, religious services begin each day at the Golden Temple in the early hours of the morning. This is the *mul mantra* which comprises the opening lines from the Guru Granth – the central scripture of the Sikhs compiled in 1604 by Guru Arjan, who then formally installed it in the newly constructed building since then known as Harimandir, the inner sanctum sanctorum. Since its construction by Guru Ramdas, the Harimandir has been and remains, above all, a spiritual centre – a place where Sikhs come to contemplate the divine, to recite and sing hymns from the Guru Granth Sahib. It affirms the Sikh tradition through its rituals and observances known as *maryada*, whose contents and delivery have evolved over two centuries and have become fixed and rigid, thereby defying its more fluid beginnings. If indivisibility, centrality and exclusivity are taken to be three attributes of a sacred place, the Harimandir fulfils it ideally.<sup>2</sup> In modern sociological jargon, one could also say, the Harimandir is both a constructed and a socially produced sacred place.

Just after midnight, a group of Amritdhari [initiated] Sikhs will start washing Harimandir Sahib with water drawn from *har-ki-pauri*. Meanwhile, pilgrims who would be staying around the complex during the night start gathering and recite gurbani at *Darshani Deorhi*, the doors to Harimandir. At a fixed hour the doors of *Darshani Deorhi* are opened. Devotees rush in measured steps towards Harimandir, where formal hymn-singing commences. This is called *chownki* – the first round of such hymn-singing, which continues until it is time to sing Guru Nanak's authoritative hymn, *asa di var*. In the meantime, a palanquin carrying the Guru Granth starts from the Akal Takhat. Sikh devotees vie to touch the holy book or put a shoulder to the palanquin to carry it for a few precious moments. This slow-moving procession is announced at the gates of Harimandir



with a drum while *ragis* conclude the hymn-singing through an appropriate *shabad* welcoming the *guru*. As the Guru Granth is lifted from the *Palki* by the head *granthi*, all stand to attention, reciting *satnam waheguru*. The *granthi* places the holy book on *Manji Sahib* at the centre of the shrine. As clothes around the holy book are ritually unwrapped, a relay of orators sings *varan*, lauding the great and virtuous gurus and the sacred shrine, and concludes with '*darshan parsie guru ka janam maran dukh jaye*' [by glimpsing the true guru, the pain of birth and death is lifted]. Then Guru Granth is opened and a passage read through, which becomes the day's *hukamnama* or holy order for the day. This is posted immediately on the noticeboard outside and instantaneously picked up by various Sikh websites across the world, where translations into English and other languages are made available. After singing a few more hymns, the Sikh congregation stands for *ardas* (a collective prayer) and *parshad* is distributed at its conclusion.<sup>3</sup> The Granth rests there during the day with an attendant, while a relay of hymn-singers recite *gurbani* throughout the day. Pilgrims and visitors come for *darshan*, sit for a while and take leave. Depending upon seasons, there are also fixed hours of the evening schedule. Hymn-singing is concluded followed by the recitation of *rehras* and a collective prayer. The daily ceremony ends as the Guru Granth is taken back in a procession to the Akal Takhat for the night rest. The book is treated as reverentially as the personification of the gurus. Its message is an essential part of Sikh existence, with profound social practices for the Sikh community's religious and ethical standards.

The Golden Temple is the most eminent site of a community's verifiable history, collective memory and myths. Above all, it is a living space acting as a daily custodian of the Sikh belief system which encompasses several different cultural traditions. The participatory nature of Sikh worship within its daily *maryada* — a set of routine religious services concluding with *ardas* — has been vital to the history and evolution of the community, weaving narratives of the community's past into the present and pointedly linking it with the future. Each building with its own specific history and associated functions is harmoniously connected to the *sarovar*, itself imputed with regenerative and curative properties whose self-applauding epithet '*Dithe sabhe thaun nahin tudh jehiya*' [having seen all the places, none matches you] seems self-evident to the Sikh pilgrim.

Unsurprisingly, control over the Golden Temple has given rise to fierce contestations, with its internal *maryada* being subjected to passionate theological elaboration and dispute, and statements emanating from its personnel, especially the Jathedar of Akal Takhat, subjected to close scrutiny. In a nutshell, the Golden Temple represents an alternative source of power and discourse, paralleling the functioning of a state. Thus, control of such a site is an extremely sensitive matter for the community and the state. In a way the conflict is writ large on its doors, which preserve an exclusive repository of the community's history, memory and consensual narratives. For the Mughals and the Afghans its presence was an obstruction for their passage to Hindustan; for the Sikh rulers, it was an object of glorification and legitimisation of their rule; the colonial rulers maintained a respectful detachment while keeping a firm eye on its internal management, while for the post-colonial Indian state it represented a competing centre of power legitimising a minority's claim to nationhood and a potential site of revolt and secession.

Administered by the SGPC since 1925, it became indisputably the most important Sikh shrine in 1947 due to the partition of Punjab when Nankana Sahib became

part of Pakistan. Since 1947, as in the past, the Golden Temple has been the nerve centre of the Sikh community, with numerous political mobilisations and meetings. Since the early days, buildings have been added and demolished around it regularly under various circumstances. While such demolitions were enforced by Afghan and Mughal rulers, the latest, which became the third *Ghallughara*, was ordered by the Indian state in June 1984.

### The third *Ghallughara*

Monuments get broken as they contain history. (Ezra Pound)

*Ghallughara* is not a lightly used term in the Panjabi language. Derived from Sikh historical literature, its use is restricted to just two episodes, and even when it is applied to them, a distinction is made between the two. The first, which occurred in 1746, is called *Chhota Ghallughara* (Small Holocaust), and the second, which came in 1762, is known as *Vadda Ghallughara* (Great Holocaust). The third *Ghallughara*, as it is commonly known among the community, came some 220 years later in 1984 when the Indian army invaded the Golden Temple. Application of this terminology to the new tragedy suggests a community's search for its attending redemptive value of quick recovery from such massacres as also to use it as a resource to challenge the accompanying hegemonic discourse by the Indian state. But by drawing a parallel to earlier holocausts it also carries the risk of a crude comparison of Ahmad Shah Abdali's trepidations with Indira Gandhi's ruinous blunder. In this way it obscures the more complicated and tragic consequences of the third *Ghallughara*, as both the Sikhs and the Indian state have evolved into far more complex structures since the eighteenth century.

June is the cruellest of the summer months in Punjab, with the sun scorching its plains while western winds sweep muddy dust through its villages and towns. It is also the month of Guru Arjan's martyrdom. Unmindful of the Sikh calendar, the Indian government ordered six armed divisions of the Indian army led by a lieutenant general and two major generals, with armoured carriers, tanks and mountain guns – all against 300 to 500 men armed with nothing more than 'LMGs, antiquated 303 rifles, some hand grenades and a rusty bazooka'. The army marched into villages and towns around Punjab, imposing a week-long curfew, and took up positions around the Golden Temple on the evening of 3 June 1984. The battle for the Golden Temple had begun. The army was ordered to use minimal force to 'free the Golden Temple from "extremists and terrorists"' (Government of India 1984), while for the Sikhs inside it was a battle for maintaining the temple's sanctity. The government had decided to send in the army as a final response to the Akali Dal's campaign for forty-five demands presented to the federal government in 1981. After several rounds of talks, the campaign had become progressively more violent.

Code-named 'Operation Bluestar', army action ended as a major disaster both militarily as well in its supposed aim of curbing violence in Punjab.<sup>4</sup> The Indian army could not clear the sacred temple of the insurgents without damaging the temple extensively. After suffering extreme losses for two days, the army used six tanks and approximately eighty high-explosive squash-head shells to reduce Sikh



insurgents' fortified positions at the Akal Takhat to rubble. Among the rubble lay a large catalogue of Sikh heritage: handwritten copies of Guru Granth, canopies, including a canopy donated by the Sikh royalty in its famous Tosh-e-khana, gold and silver palanquins, and other historic gifts to the Golden Temple.<sup>5</sup> The morning of 7 June saw a fire sweeping through another treasury of Sikh heritage at the Sikh Museum and Library with many rare handwritten manuscripts, *hukamnamas*.<sup>6</sup> Several hundred pilgrims, including women and children, died in the crossfire. The army converted Guru Ramdas Sarai into 'enemy prison camps' where more civilians died in the suffocating heat without water. Total casualties inside the Golden Temple remain contested, between the official counts of 300 army officers and men and 500 civilians, while impartial observers put the numbers at 700 army officers and men and about 5,000 civilians.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the strict curfew, with tanks surrounding villages in the countryside and helicopters hovering above, thousands of angry Sikhs rushed towards Amritsar carrying arms and homemade weapons to save the sanctity of the Golden Temple.<sup>8</sup> Mutinies broke out among Sikh soldiers, the most serious at the Sikh Regimental Centre, Ramgarh in Bihar involving over 1,500 soldiers. Other regiments which mutinied were the 18th Sikh in Miran Sahib, Jammu, the 9th Sikh at Lalgah Jattan, Ganagnagar, Rajasthan, the 14th Punjab [Nabha Akal] at Pune, Maharashtra and the 171 Field Regiment at Alwar, Rajasthan.<sup>9</sup> Through events such as these the Sikh rebellion was born and grew up fast. The army took control of 37 other historic Gurdwaras. On 31 October, Mrs Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her two Sikh bodyguards. Anti-Sikh pogroms followed, orchestrated by Congress Party workers, in which over 3,000 Sikhs were killed in New Delhi, while several hundred died in other northern cities.

Punjab was soon converted into a theatre of war. In order to contain the Sikh resistance, Indian security forces had to undertake several more special operations: Operation Woodrose, Operation Blackthunder, Rakshak, Night Dominance, Rakshak II and Final Assault. The rebellion lasted almost a decade, claiming an estimated toll of 80,000 lives. As Punjab was abandoned to the security forces armed with draconian anti-terrorist powers, bloody confrontations took place across the province. With the adoption of 'bullet for bullet' policy by police and security forces, fake encounters, extrajudicial killings and torture became the norm. A 'dead silence' was enforced after a decade-long undeclared war in the Punjab. In 1992, a spuriously elected Congress Party was installed into power under Beant Singh as Chief Minister. His murder on 31 July 1995 effectively signalled the end of the Sikh resistance movement, whose origins lay in the army invasion of the Golden Temple.

### **The 'morning after' amid ruined monuments and shattered memories**

The army attack on the Golden Temple complex, its manner and execution resulting in the demolition of the Akal Takhat, with extensive damage to all of the sacred complex, sent shock waves into Sikh communities around the world. A normally proud community stood humiliated. For once, however, it was united as never before. While it was deeply painful for people to deal with reports about the Golden Temple complex in flames, the Akal Takhat in ruins, hundreds of dead bodies scattered around the pool

with their blood mingling into its sacred water, the pain itself went beyond the physical damage to the sacred site. The reaction after the *Ghallughara* was precisely what is usually associated with a trauma. In psychotherapeutic literature, a trauma is defined not so much as the undergoing of intense, inflicted pain, but as a state of what is strictly terror. In the words of Judith Herman:<sup>10</sup>

At the moment of trauma, the victim is rendered helpless by overwhelming force. When the force is that of nature, we speak of disasters. When the force is that of other human beings, we speak of atrocities. Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems that give people a sense of control, connection and meaning.

For Sikhs throughout India and abroad, the widely circulating reports of a shattered Akal Takhat helped to fracture the idea of Sikh sovereignty in India. The surrender of leading campaigners Dharam Yudh Morcha, Gurcharan Singh Tohra and Sant Harchand Singh Longowal had disgraced the common prayer celebrating 'sacrifice for the faith'. After the army's invasion, the imputed invulnerability of the 'guru's abode', indeed, the very idea of a Sikh heroic tradition, appeared to have been reduced to the status of myth whose meta-narratives of martyrdom suddenly seemed like make-believe tales told by selfish preachers to gullible audiences.

As the government allowed Sikh pilgrims inside the Golden Temple for two hours under the watchful eyes of military personnel, there were tears, some crying openly or sobbing uncontrollably, while others looked on in disbelief at the shattered Akal Takhat and charred buildings all around. As David Lloyd points out, in such a situation

[t]he perpetrator, no less than the victim, insists on the conditions of silence. This can occur both through the coercive exercise of power, physically and discursively and through the more intricate and 'hegemonic' use of power that occludes from public space the social logics within which the victim could 'make sense'.<sup>11</sup>

The first groups of pilgrims allowed back in the Golden Temple after the attack exhibited all the symptoms of trauma, crying uncontrollably, looking amazed and bewildered, just trying to forget what they had seen, some exclaiming, 'I am not a Sikh any more', others retrieving a broken stone from the debris to take home, but above all unable to speak about or share what they had seen. None among the first pilgrims have left their impressions. Perhaps the scene was too painful for verbal expression. For many Sikhs the government's action was not only an unpardonable sacrilege, it broke an implicit trust that had existed since 1947 between the Sikh community and the Indian government. A poet expressed the anguish through a lament:

There will be agreements  
Promises to hold, nurturing of bonds, even  
But severed is the trust unsaid as it was  
Broken is that trust, and forever<sup>12</sup>



Later Sikh visitors, among them Khushwant Singh, recorded how despite repairing most of the buildings by the government, they could still see the bullet holes through the Harimandir itself. It was obvious that the state had lied about the damage to the inner sanctum too. Khushwant Singh, the most seasoned commentator on the Sikh affairs, echoed the collective Sikh sentiments as:

My heart is very full but I will be as unemotional and objective as I can. All I will say about the army action is that it was a tragic error of judgement, a grievous mistake and miscalculation which will cover many black pages in the history of India, Punjab and the Sikhs . . . . This action has humiliated the pride of a very proud people. A proud people do not forget or forgive very easily.<sup>13</sup>

He also predicted quite correctly the Sikhs' anger:

It will take a long time for blood-stains to be washed away from the marble *parikarma* and the building around the Harimandir. It will take even longer for the sullen resentment smouldering in the hearts of the Sikh community to subside. Time can be the best healer, provided nothing is done to further exacerbate Sikh sentiment.<sup>14</sup>

But there was more to come: the state itself was to turn hostile.

### **Managing the trauma: A state versus a community**

As the soldiers started mopping up the *parikarma*, disposing of rotting bodies unceremoniously into hired trucks outside the main gate, the government had to open another front: a propaganda war aimed to control a community's anger and trauma. Indeed, the Indian state's propaganda following the army action in the Golden Temple can be aptly rephrased through Auden's poem 'And the lie of authority whose buildings grope the sky'.<sup>15</sup> Controlling information regarding the damage to the holy buildings was the first worry for the government as Sikhs from villages were being blocked by army units from reaching Amritsar. The government-controlled Doordarshan showed Kirpal Singh, Jathedar of Akal Takhat, clearly under duress, reading a statement that most buildings were intact. In the next few days, blatant lies were broadcast, including the discovery of drugs, women abused by militants and exaggerated tales of terrorists' misdeeds inside.<sup>16</sup> Sikh listeners switched to BBC and foreign news channels for more accurate reports.

An even more urgent task facing the government was to salvage the destruction of the Akal Takhat as it rightly feared Sikhs' outrage on seeing the damaged building. Immediately a Delhi contractor was hired, while a Nihang leader, Santa Singh was commandeered to supervise its reconstruction. Buta Singh, the only Sikh member of the federal government, was flying furiously between Delhi, Amritsar and Patna to appease the situation. Within days a new Akal Takhat was rebuilt.<sup>17</sup>

The state was to justify its brutal action for a greater cause – namely, the unity of India. It presented a resolution through Parliament, which approved the government's 'timely action', with most opposition leaders lauding the armed forces'

'restraint and bravery'. There were few dissenters. Within six weeks of the army action, Indian officials put together a White Paper containing a highly skewed account of the circumstances which forced the state to act.<sup>18</sup> Chronicling the army's action with bureaucratic precision, it showed photographs of weapons and listed a catalogue of violent incidents prior to the army action alongside the text of the Prime Minister's broadcast. The government narrative of self-justification centred around the need to prevent the balkanisation of India. In her broadcast on 2 June, Mrs Indira Gandhi, the Indian Prime Minister, addressed the nation with the following words:

Fellow citizens, these past months, my heart has been heavy with sorrow, each day's tragedies adding to the anguish. Punjab is uppermost in all our minds. Yet an impression has been assiduously created that it is not being dealt with. My colleagues and I have repeatedly explained, in parliament and outside, the government's readiness to accept all reasonable demands put forward by the Akali Dal when they started their agitation, but new demands continue to be pressed. Unfortunately, the leadership of the agitation appears to have been seized by a group of fanatics and terrorists whose instruments for achieving whatever they may have in view of murder, arson and loot. Large scale violence and terrorism grip the state. Let us join together to heal wounds. Don't shed blood, shed hatred.<sup>19</sup>

Clearly Indira Gandhi found no real contradiction between her appeal for peace and her decision to send in the army. But such double-speak was nothing new for India's politicians. More literature was to follow, some of it sent abroad for the agitated diaspora Sikhs. With the army in control of Punjab, rebuttal of such massive state propaganda and lies was an impossible task. Nevertheless the government's tactics had not gone unchallenged prior to the army action. Khushwant Singh, a member of parliament, had pointedly asked the Indian government on 8 August 1983 to explain the charge laid by the Prime Minister:

The PM has gone on record to say that at different times the Akalis have been adding to their demands. To the best of my knowledge they made a concise list of 45 demands and to this day they have not added a single one to these 45.<sup>20</sup>

He also questioned the government's charge of misusing the Golden Temple:

[M]uch has been said about the misuse of gurdwaras for harbouring criminals. Mr. Home Minister if you have any concrete evidence of criminals being harboured inside the Golden Temple, you should place it on the Table of the House. At one time a list of 40 men was given to the Akali Dal; it was found that at least four of them were not even living in the country. They were abroad . . . . Is this the kind of evidence that you are going to give us and then say that the Golden Temple is being misused?<sup>21</sup>

Several experts and strategists had suggested that a less dramatic end to the stalemate between the militants and the central government might have been possible if the Prime Minister's advisors or army generals had either taken the Golden Temple's



managers into confidence or further pursued diplomatic means.<sup>22</sup> The only logical conclusion is that her motive was to win the forthcoming parliamentary elections by projecting herself as a saviour of India who saved the country from disintegration.

### **Projecting Sikhs as the 'other'**

As a result of the government's intense media campaign after June 1984, Indians were constantly reminded of how Mrs Gandhi's 'tough action' had defeated 'schemes for dismembering India' hatched by Pakistan and other unspecified western countries. Characterizing the Akali Dal's demands as 'anti-national', the Sikhs were stereotyped at best as untrustworthy, at worst as 'traitors'.<sup>23</sup>

Rajiv Gandhi, the next Prime Minister of India, lost no time in making capital out of his mother's assassination. During the 1985 parliamentary elections, Sikhs were presented as the 'enemy within'.<sup>24</sup> Across many towns and cities, huge billboards showed two uniformed Sikhs shooting down a bloodstained Mrs Gandhi against the back-drop of a map of India.<sup>25</sup> Other posters displayed in prominent places in major Indian cities screamed headlines such as, 'Will the country's border finally be moved to your doorstep?'<sup>26</sup> By whipping up such hate and hysteria, Rajiv Gandhi won 401 of 508 parliamentary seats – the biggest landslide since 1947. H. K. L. Bhagat, a Congress candidate from a Delhi constituency where the largest number of Sikhs were killed during anti-Sikh riots, secured the second largest majority. However, just to illustrate how events in Punjab were totally out of step with the rest of India, Simranjeet Singh Mann – a jailed Sikh police officer accused of being a confidante of Bhindranwale – was elected to Parliament from Amritsar district by a huge margin.

### **Inventing demons: Bhindranwale**

Besides presenting Sikhs as India's 'other', the state also projected Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and his accomplices as 'terrorists' or extremists, thus reversing his earlier portrayal by the Indian media as a charismatic preacher 'Sant' who was openly promoted by the Congress Party to undermine the political stance of the SGPC. In the aftermath of army action, such a portrayal became more urgent as Bhindranwale and his associates came to be regarded as 'martyrs'. The White Paper quoted excerpts from the statements of 'Shri' Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale<sup>27</sup> as proof. Clearly some parts of Bhindranwale's recorded speeches, if read in isolation, seem to call upon the youth to openly defy the state and in particular instances call for retribution against the 'guilty'.<sup>28</sup> By comparison, evidence of his alleged advocacy for a separate Sikh state, Khalistan, pales into insignificance. To give a couple of examples: 'My only concern is that we want all the demands of the Anandpur Sahib resolution accepted i.e. Sikhs are a separate nation'; and, 'The Sikhs are a separate nation, and this fact must be recognised. The Sikhs must have special status in the Indian union, the state of Punjab must be given the status enjoyed by Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 of the constitution'. Much of the official line to brand Bhindranwale and his associates as 'terrorists' was taken up by the popular national media.<sup>29</sup>

## Re-defining the sacred space

The ruling government in Delhi then attempted to redefine and limit the sacred space within the spiralling complex of the Golden Temple into various grades of sacredness. At one time it was asserted that only the innermost sanctum sanctorum, Harimandir, was such an area. All other buildings were subject to ordinary regulations, meaning that these could be entered by security forces or even damaged with immunity. Examples were cited from the past when the police had entered particular areas without earning the wrath of the clergy or the Sikh public in general. After Operation Blackthunder it was decided to demarcate the outer boundary of the Golden Temple by erecting a wall. For this purpose, all houses and shops in the vicinity were quickly acquired and demolished. The aim, according to the police chief, Ribeiro, was to 'maintain a security cordon around the temple'.<sup>30</sup>

## Assault on identity

In the immediate aftermath of 1984, Sikh defiance became more visible, literally marked on the bodies of young male Sikhs who started wearing saffron-coloured turbans. In some ways this played into the hands of the state machinery, which was able to identify, register and thus manufacture a specific profile for the 'enemy'. An Indian Army newsletter circulated around regimental centres categorised 'Amritdhari Sikhs' as prime suspects and the partaking of *amrit* as defiance of the state:

At the time of Operation Bluestar in 1984 when an armed confrontation occurred between Sikhs and government forces surrounding the Golden Temple, a profile was developed of who was considered to be anti-government and pro-Khalistan. Based on that profile, young Sikh men between the ages of 18 and 40 who have long beards and wear turbans are considered to be pro-Khalistan.<sup>31</sup>

As the State Intelligence Department started compiling monthly dossiers on Amritdharis, one retired Punjab police official felt that 'such ludicrous actions could only add to resentment'.<sup>32</sup> So Amritdharis equated with Khalistanis became legitimate targets of investigation. As another official commented: 'Once an Amritdhari Sikh is arrested, it is probable that he will continue to be rearrested after release. Moreover if the police have no suspect for a case or need to arrest someone in order to fulfill an arrest quota, Amritdhari Sikhs are often the victims'. This was a classic case of how a person's body could be marked by imputed beliefs, thereby being rendered punishable.<sup>33</sup>

## A soft target: Sikh diaspora

The White Paper devotes several pages to providing proof of the role of diaspora Sikhs in fermenting separatism.<sup>34</sup> It particularly notes the role of Dal Khalsa

leaders in Britain, Jaswant Singh Thekedar and Jagjit Singh Chohan – a self-proclaimed leader of the Council of Khalistan. It omits to mention how Thekedar only arrived in late 1983 and Chohan was boycotted by all mainstream overseas Sikh communities till 1984 when the tragedy not only rehabilitated him but proved, in the minds of many angry Sikhs, that he had always been right! The White Paper then advances other false arguments, citing protest marches by overseas Sikhs against the army attack on the Golden Temple as evidence of diasporic support for separatism. As Punjab was gripped by fighting between the state security forces and militants in the rural areas, several overseas Sikh organisations were formed. These organizations allied themselves with particular militant outfits, and outside of India, began a campaign to present Sikhs' right to self-determination. As the tragedy of 1984 alerted them to the community's vulnerability as a minority in Hindu dominated India, some leaders quickly learned from other diaspora communities to explore various international platforms. While Jewish pre-Holocaust theologians and philosophers had buttressed the Jewish diasporic condition by linking it to an ultimate return to a Jewish homeland, Sikh intellectuals tended to rely on a naive use of cliché's such as: 'those who were lucky have got away from Punjab' and 'where our guru dwells, that becomes home'.<sup>35</sup> A few unsolved murders and a string of violent activities within major diaspora Sikh communities, including the downing of an Air India plane in June 1985, were paraded as proofs of 'Sikh terrorism' from abroad by the Indian government. Thus overseas Sikhs became a soft target for the government allegations more out of their gullibility than for any sophisticated articulation of an independent homeland.

The role played by the Sikh diaspora in sending humanitarian aid to anti-Sikh riot victims of Delhi and elsewhere and later help for Sikh refugees fleeing state terror were contested and obstructed by Indian missions abroad.<sup>36</sup> The Indian government was to sign several extradition treaties to 'rein in' Sikh terrorists and their activities. The first such treaty was signed in December 1985 with the Government of Canada.

## **The Sikh response: revenge and loss**

As humiliation strikes, so arises the resistance. (Guru Gobind Singh)<sup>37</sup>

### *The mobilisation of memories*

It is also worth speculating about the rise of the Sikh resistance movement in the 'morning after' *Ghallughara*. It is obvious that the community's myths and memories associated with the Harimandir's past defence by the Sikhs in the eighteenth century continued to inspire resistance to the State narratives. Several fighting bands emerged almost on the eighteenth-century pattern of Sikh misls. Their leaders called themselves lieutenant generals – signifying Sikhs' ample familiarity with weaponry and army hierarchy from the colonial era. But pitted against a late-twentieth-century state far removed from Afghani invaders and bandits of the eighteenth century, such a resistance movement was bound to fail unless closely coordinated through an overarching body. For this purpose, a Panthic Committee came into existence, held a Sarbat Khalsa at the Golden Temple in January 1986 and declared an agreed



programme of action and political agenda. However, an attempt to re-possess the Golden Temple ended in a humiliating submission and several so-called militants disgraced themselves in the eyes of Sikh masses during Operation Blackthunder.<sup>38</sup>

Even a cursory look at the Sikh resistance movement and its characteristic mobilisation confirms it as a spontaneous rebellion by the Sikh peasantry. Equipped with a typically Punjabi notion of honour, avenging the felt humiliation was considered obligatory and just.<sup>39</sup> There appears to have been little more to it than that. However, once Indira Gandhi and General Vaidya, the army chief – two main culprits – were eliminated, pinning responsibility for the humiliation became increasingly difficult. Were the Akalis and Congress leaders who were thought to have either ‘betrayed’ or ‘colluded’ with the government also guilty? Probably so. However, there were other legitimate targets which appeared to be sanctioned by tradition. Gurcharan Singh Tohra and Harchand Singh Longowal, two main leaders, had surrendered to the army, ‘shaming’ the community by breaking the tradition of ‘fighting for the Golden Temple’s sanctity to the last’.<sup>40</sup> Longowal was killed in September 1985 after he had signed a ‘Punjab package’ with Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi – another act of betrayal in the eyes of some militants. Tohra escaped an assassination bid and survived to hold the reins of the SGPC for several years, breaking another vow to retire from active politics.

As the struggle slipped far away from its original momentum, and with security forces successfully experimenting with new methods of eliminating various militant outfits, the latter turned their guns against informants and some communists. Various militant groups developed their own agendas of survival and settling scores, which included murdering many ‘moderates’, among them Balwant Singh, Giani Partap Singh, Bibi Rajinder Kaur, and scores of second-rung leaders. In the late 1980s, at its peak, militants had ‘liberated’ much of the countryside, especially in the Majha region, through the power of the gun and by issuing various ‘codes’ for their regime. Examples of such edicts include a ‘dress code’ for students, a ‘simple marriages’ code for society, the adoption of ‘Panjabi’ for all communications, and the new self-designation *Kharhkoo*, instead of the official term *atwadi*.

Although militant groups had initially received shelter and help from rural Sikhs, this support structure gradually collapsed. Hounded by the better armed Punjab police assisted by paramilitary forces and army, and infiltrated by informers, the movement gradually lost not only its collective role but crucially its image of ‘fighting on behalf of the community’. Murderous rivalries between militant factions and the fact that many of the new recruits were motivated by personal gain weakened it from within, and it became almost an internal war of attrition. The desperation of the militants became evident through the random murders of migrant Hindu labourers, the indiscriminate killing of train passengers, and the murders of a leading Bhakra Nangal engineer and the Regional Director of Broadcasting. Such acts underlined the exhaustion of the movement’s original inspiration. Such mindless violence of course provided increasing justification for escalation of violence by the State.

Nevertheless, during their decade-long resistance, Sikh militant outfits posed a serious challenge to the State, which had to empower its security forces with such extraordinary measures that some observers have labelled it as nothing less than ‘state terrorism’.<sup>41</sup> Leaving Punjab to the free play of security forces, it disposed of all burdensome procedures of fair trials and judicial recourse, replacing them with

anti-terrorism laws. The Punjab police and paramilitary forces violated both international human rights laws as well as the laws governing internal armed conflicts. Through deliberate policies approved by federal government politicians under the Congress [I] National Front and Janta Dal [S], administrations gave blanket authority to the police and paramilitary forces in Punjab to act outside the law.<sup>42</sup> As one knowledgeable officer comments on the attitude of federal politicians: 'there is little hesitation in my mind in holding the P. V. Narasimha Rao government responsible for treating Punjab as a guinea pig'.<sup>43</sup> The catalogue of abuses by state security forces included murder, torture and disappearances. This was not a one-off policy, but

characterised every phase of the government's policy through ten years of conflict in Punjab as the political confrontation of the early 1980s escalated into near-civil war by 1990. Operation Rakshak [Protector] II, the counter-insurgency operation that ultimately crushed most of the military groups by mid-1993, represented the most extreme example of a policy in which the end appeared to justify any and all means, including torture and murder.<sup>44</sup>

At one time the Punjab police were assisted by nine divisions of army. As Kanwar Sandhu commented in *India Today*, the Punjab police under K. P. S. Gill effectively turned into

[m]ercenaries . . . Besides the rewards for killing listed militants [annual outlay for the purpose: Rs. 1.13 crore], the department gives 'unannounced rewards' for killing unlisted militants. Every week the Inspector Generals of various ranges send their lists to Additional Deputy General O. P. Sharma. The amount can vary from Rs. 40,000 to Rs. 5 lakh.<sup>45</sup>

Thus the Sikh rebellion was put down by such force and tactics in which extrajudicial killing and torture were fully sanctioned by the state. The federal government abandoned Punjab to its security forces, making little effort to address the underlying causes of the Sikh rebellion – namely, the humiliation felt by a people due to the Indian state's folly of sending armed forces into the Golden Temple.

### **Traditions undermined**

It was inevitable that attack on the Golden Temple would have enormous repercussions on Sikh beliefs and customs too. The Sikh peasantry was already undergoing rapid changes due to combined forces of rising literacy, urbanisation and technical innovations in agricultural production. The 1984 conflict added yet another factor that de-legitimised certain hallowed traditions from the Sikh past. The killings of civilians, police and other security personnel on such a large scale inevitably subjected the tradition of Sikh martyrdom to scrutiny and contestation. Until then martyrdom had held privileged status within the tradition, particularly by way of reference to those who sacrificed their lives for the community or, as the example of the much-venerated Baba Dip Singh shows, for the defence of the Golden Temple or other Sikh shrines. But transgression of the status of martyrdom was to

follow during the decade-long struggle when militants were killed by security forces, and ordinary Sikhs and Hindus died in the crossfire. Still later, a number of Akalis, Sikh priests, journalists and other civilians were given warnings, spared or killed. The dead included many innocent Hindus, migrant labourers, and other people. Who, then, could be regarded a martyr and what constituted martyrdom?

Further confusion over the status of martyrdom was created when the state began to promote those of its police and security forces killed by militants as 'martyrs'. It named new towns, roads and other institutions in their memory to legitimise their status. Eventually, making a reasonable distinction between a martyr and a criminal became difficult. Thus, along with a long list of community's *shahids*, there was an even longer list of security forces who lost their lives and whose kin were given financial compensation and honours for 'Indian patriotism', while several communists were also treated as martyrs by their respective parties. The militants' claim to martyrdom status was further undermined by the fact that the official proof of an individual's conduct could only be furnished through police files, which often contained concocted evidence of the militants' 'dastardly deeds'.

Another Sikh tradition became wrapped into the crisis – namely, the role and status of the Akal Takhat Jathedar. Tradition had imputed the Jathedar the custodianship of Sikh ethical and moral standards. The Jathedar could and did discipline its errant leaders through confession and penance. The Jathedar had the power to excommunicate a Sikh considered to have deviated from Sikh ethical norms through *hukamnama*. Tradition had also privileged the Jathedar to ensure consensus in matters of Sikh 'national interests', for which purpose he could summon a *Sarbat Khalsa*. Underlying this tradition was a narrative of the building of Akal Takhat by Guru Hargobind, the sixth guru who, by wearing two swords, introduced a concept of *miri-piri*. While various shades of meaning are possible and have been debated since, the later history of the community, especially of eighteenth-century misl chiefs who would gather at the Akal Takhat every Baisakhi or Diwali to settle their outstanding differences and evolve a 'nationalist' agenda, has meant at a popular level that politics and religion are inseparable. At a more practical level it meant that the two institutions – Akal Takhat and the Harimandir – the political and spiritual centres respectively – have more or less been tied.

The passage of this institution and its associated traditions into the twentieth century has become increasingly vexed. During the early decades of the nineteenth century, the Sikh ruler Maharajah Ranjit Singh never called a *Sarbat Khalsa*, though there is a famous episode of his submission to the authority of Akal Takhat Jathedar over certain moral lapses in his marital life. While British rule put a new and futuristic arrangement for the upkeep of historical shrines in the hands of an elected body of Sikhs, its legal framework could only translate the Akal Takhat Jathedar's traditional powers as subservient to an elected body. The contradiction between the Jathedar's assumed role as a spokesperson and neutral mediator between the community's various factions, and his actual role as a paid employee of the SGPC, has made the Akal Takhat Jathedar's position highly susceptible to the machinations of Akali Dal politicians. Since 1925 the Akali Dal has held a tight reign over the SGPC and the Jathedar's pronouncements, and used historic gurdwaras as convenient platforms for mobilisation.

Severe contradictions had already begun to surface in the functioning of the Akal Takhat Jathedars during the Akali Dal's fight for a Punjabi suba from the 1950s to



1966. The operation in which the Indian state used military force to reduce the Akal Takhat to rubble exposed the community's misplaced faith in the Akal Takhat as the highest temporal authority of the Sikhs. The Indian state could thus feel secure by building another replica of the original. In response, all the community could do was to pull down the state-built Akal Takhat and rebuild another replica of the original, thereby feigning a collective amnesia. Whatever authority was left in the replicated building was further undermined at first by various militant outfits and then by various factions of the Akali Dal during the post-1984 period, especially in the personal feuds of Parkash Singh Badal and Gurcharan Singh Tohra.

In the immediate aftermath of the 1984 tragedy the Akal Takhat Jathedar came under intense pressure from Buta Singh, Zail Singh and numerous other Sikhs who were part of the Indian state. Buta Singh – a minister in Indira Gandhi's cabinet in Delhi – played a crucial role in the post-1984 handling of the crisis by cajoling and manipulating the Sikh community's anger. Resurrecting an old tradition, it was the government who called a Sarbat Khalsa on 11 August 1984 at Amritsar. At its officially sponsored rally, delegates indicted the SGPC for mismanaging the Golden Temple and threatened to transfer control of gurdwaras to another body. The government tried to divide the community by playing up various religious factions within the Panth, but the Sikh community, united in grief, showed remarkable solidarity. In retaliation, the Akal Takhat Jathedar, Kirpal Singh, called a 'real' Sarbat Khalsa on 24 September in Amritsar, where a large gathering indicted the Indian state with an ultimatum to hand the Golden Temple back to the SGPC within a month.

The Jathedar pronounced Buta Singh a *tankhayiah*. Another Sikh, the serving President of India, Giani Zail Singh, was also declared *tankhayiah* for the relatively minor charge of carrying an umbrella during his visit to the Golden Temple in June 1984. After his plea was heard, Zail Singh was forgiven. Buta Singh used the official power and patronage at his disposal to defy the excommunication order of the Akal Takhat until 1994.<sup>46</sup> By then the concept of *miri* (politics) had been brought into disrepute. From 1985 a succession of Jathedars had short spans – itself indication of the dangerous but pivotal nature of the post. Every Jathedar had to tread a fine line between militant groups, rival Akali Dals, and the dictates of the nation state. Two Jathedars during this period left some mark: Professor Darshan Singh, who stood up to the power of the state and the militants alike; and Jasbir Singh Rode, a relative of the late Bhindranwale, who manipulated and tinkered with the Harimandir's *maryada*.

### Forms of resistance

The Sikh resistance took many forms, from the change of colour of turbans, and *chunis* for women, to attending *bhogs* for militants, playing music of Sikhs' heroic tradition, and providing shelter and food for Sikh rebels. More tellingly, for the sacrilege committed by the Indian government in the Golden Temple, a ritual purification of the premises was dictated by tradition. A *kar seva* was undertaken after the army handed over the Golden Temple to the SGPC in October 1984. Thousands of Sikh devotees participated in this both as a defiance of official hegemonic discourse and also to show solidarity with the community. The *sarovar* was emptied and all

sediments at the base removed. After Operation Blackthunder a similar *kar seva* was again organised.

While some issues could be evoked through a tradition that emphasised the community's sense of autonomy, urgent matters, created by state politics, underlined the community's vulnerability. Due to the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, over 125,000 Sikhs who had migrated to Punjab needed rehabilitation. Although the SGPC promised some help, the scale of support required an organised, ordered and continuous operation which could only be handled by the state. The Punjab government tried to devise some policies, but its attitude remained evasive. During the decade-long resistance, almost daily fake encounters, arrests and harassment of Sikh families had left thousands of parents, wives and children vulnerable and in need of legal and financial assistance to retrieve their lives. Those who were repeatedly picked up by security forces and locked in prisons under various anti-terrorist legislation needed advocates. These legal representatives were also not immune from the ire of the security forces. Jaswant Singh Khalra, who discovered over 1,000 men cremated in Amritsar district crematoria without any records, himself joined this list in September 1995 as he was picked up from home and never returned. Several years later Ajit Singh Sandhu, a Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) at Tarn Taran who was implicated in the disappearance of Khalra, committed suicide. His suicide was interpreted as proof of undue pressure on 'brave' police officers and men who had fought Sikh militants. The state could not prosecute them as many had been rewarded and decorated for taking part in the Operation Bluestar and the subsequent operations. The awarding ceremony, the first of which was held in 1985 with President Zail Singh, was, in Khushwant Singh's view, a 'shameful spectacle'.<sup>47</sup>

### **Unequal match: contesting memories and commemoration**

The *Ghallughara* set in motion many heart-searching debates within the community. As seen above, the reconstruction of the Akal Takhat that was taken up by the state embodied intensely passionate feelings and memories. Indeed, such was its sanctity that the officially reconstructed monument was deemed unacceptable to the community. It was pulled down and rebuilt through traditional *seva*. Although a minority wanted to keep the site as a reminder of the Indian state's barbarism, the SGPC was as keen as the state to return the sacred complex to its pre-1984 functioning. Here was a case of both perpetrator and victim seeking 'normality' as if nothing had happened. The government was obviously relieved at the SGPC's commonsensical approach and eased the threat to dismantle it.

### **Politics of commemoration**

There is as yet no commemoration for the dead and the destruction of historical monuments by the army operation in the Golden Temple. Incredibly, in an age of statistics, no one has counted the dead nor reported on how many suffered during June 1984 in Amritsar and other places. The dates of the army invasion have

become part of the Sikh calendar but have presented a considerable headache both for the state and Sikh politicians. For several years after June 1984, security forces had ensured complete silence at the Golden Temple on these dates. The only alternative was one undertaken by Damdami Taksal when, for a few odd years, it would arrange a commemoration away from Amritsar honouring many widows and parents of prominent militants who were killed, designating them as martyrs with *siropas*. Militants who fought against the Indian armed forces during three crucial days in the Golden Temple were praised for their bravery, linking them with the 'heroic tradition'.<sup>48</sup> Several songs about local militants became popular, sung by *Dhadis* and *Kavishars*. Families of Beant Singh and Satwant Singh received considerable financial backing. Militant leaders who were killed in encounters were remembered through *bhog* ceremonies. Occasionally, their parents or widows were honoured with *siropas* locally.

By the mid-1990s, as normality returned and provincial political processes started functioning, the anniversary of June 1984 became a problematic day. With an Akali Dal and Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) alliance government in Punjab from 1997 to 2002, and SGPC under the Akali Dal, a *Shahidi ardas divas* (martyrs' prayer day) was observed by the Akali Dal (Amritsar) faction headed by Simranjeet Singh Mann. On the appointed day, he led its followers to the Golden Temple amid strict police observation. The main Akali Dal could only muster courage when it lost power and was replaced by a Congress ministry. Even then senior Akali leaders would not participate due to worries that such a move could jeopardise its alliance with the BJP.

The SGPC also maintains a small museum on the first floor of the main entrance to the Golden Temple. Paintings of two prominent militants, Amrik Singh and Shabeg Singh, were only added after arguments were advanced by Professor Darshan Singh – an Akal Takhat Jathedar. A portrait of Bhindranwale had to await clearance by the Damdami Taksal as it maintained until 2005 that the Sant was alive and certain to return to lead the Sikhs, an embarrassing modern myth.<sup>49</sup> The names of pilgrims killed during the army action are inscribed on the exit stairs of the museum. The list ends abruptly and could easily be completed by soliciting information from relatives. This is not the only omission of the SGPC. Hundreds of manuscripts reportedly taken by the army authorities are awaiting return. SGPC officials have appealed to every Indian dignitary from the president of India downwards for their help to locate and return these manuscripts.

The SGPC issued a 'threat' to build a memorial for June 1984 for the first time in 2002. In that year, the Akali Dal was ousted from provincial power by the Congress Party government led by Amarinder Singh – who had resigned from Parliament in protest against the Indian army invasion. This was playing petty politics dictated by Akali Dal's contingencies. Since then, successive presidents of the SGPC, Kirpal Singh Badungar, Bibi Jagir Kaur and currently Avtar Singh Makkar, have announced proposals for such a memorial.<sup>50</sup> In summer 2005, Bibi Jagir Kaur's announcement was aimed to dissuade the neighbouring province of Haryana from its intention to set up a separate body for its historical gurdwaras. With a little nod from the federal government, the Haryana government dropped the idea, and the SGPC buried its plan. Being completely subservient to the Akali Dal politics, the SGPC has lost much of its credibility, with frequent reports of mismanagement and financial irregularities.



## **Khalsa Heritage Foundation**

In April 1999, a grand celebration of the 300th anniversary of the Sikh community took place at Anandpur Sahib. Celebrations were held amid a growing rift between Gurcharan Singh Tohra – president of the SGPC – and Parkash Singh Badal – president of Akali Dal and then the chief minister of Punjab. The Punjab government marginalised the SGPC's role by providing official patronage and effectively taking over the celebrations. The rift was evident through two parallel exhibitions for the occasion, one by the SGPC and the other sponsored by the state. The former displayed various martyrs in their untouched state, an image which sharply contrasted with the sanitised prints and paintings sponsored by the state. The Indian Ministry of Broadcasting and Information also displayed stamps issued on past anniversaries, all in Hindi and English. Punjabi, the language of Sikhs and of Punjab, was somehow found unfit to commemorate even the 300th anniversary. As part of the celebrations, a museum was announced under the patronage of the state and the Anandpur Sahib Foundation was set up with a budget of Rs. 100 crore, with half of this finance promised by the central government. Designed by an Israeli architect, the proposed museum only covers events up to 1947, as a narrative for post-1947 events would raise difficult issues. Notably, Anandpur Sahib already has a state-sponsored museum at the entrance to the historic shrine.

## **Other spaces of commemoration**

Those killed by militants have also found some space for celebration. Thus, a statue of Lala Jagat Narain was erected and a road named after him in Delhi, while his son, who also fell victim to militants' guns, is celebrated as a martyr by naming a roundabout in Jalandhar city after him. Similarly a road in Ludhiana is dedicated to the memory of a Congress leader, while an institution, Nehru Sindhant Kendra, has kept profiles of some other victims of terrorism. The Punjab Kesari group of newspapers owned by the late Lala Jagat Narain's family also floated a 'Martyrs' Fund', and distributes relief to those who lost lives due to terrorism. The annual distribution ceremony brings in a Punjab minister as well as someone from the central government to witness a queue of distressed survivors on the receiving end, generally widows.

## **People's commission**

In yet another significant contest between the state and the community, a People's Commission was proposed in 1997. Its aim was to present a comprehensive public inquiry of events leading to 1984 and its aftermath. The proposal came from a retired Supreme Court judge, Kuldip Singh, along with Ram Narayan Kumar, a human rights activist from South India.<sup>51</sup> The Punjab government headed by Parkash Singh Badal discouraged this initiative despite its manifesto pledge for such an inquiry. This was obviously due to its partnership with the Hindu nationalist BJP. The latter was highly critical of any questions regarding the role of security

forces, much less the potential of unravelling their 'crimes'. Senior Akali Dal leaders, including Parkash Singh Badal, as prime witnesses to the tragic drama, were also perhaps apprehensive since any adverse findings of such a commission could end their political careers. The proposed People's Commission could not get off the ground.

Still, the issue of human rights violations could not be wished away. Partly this was due to the internationalising of this issue by the Sikh diaspora. As a response to such pressures, the Indian government set up a National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), followed by a Punjab Human Rights Commission (PHRC).<sup>52</sup> Limited by various statutes, the NHRC had taken a limited number of cases from Punjab and in a significant decision had announced grants to over 300 relatives of disappeared persons. However, revelations about the state's dirty tricks would appear regularly. In February 2006, Sukhwinder Singh Sukhi, described as ex-chief of the dreaded Khalistan Liberation Force, declared dead several years ago, was discovered living in Jalandhar under a new identity. The case again pointed towards the Punjab police's use of 'cats' and its policy of killing and rehabilitating them.<sup>53</sup> It was also revealed that Sukhi turned Harjeet Singh Kahlon is aligned with Dal Khalsa and works for *Shahadat* – a radical Sikh monthly suggesting his services might have continued. With his case in public scrutiny, even Ajit Singh Sandhu's suicide was suggested as having been 'staged' by the police. This macabre drama of 'officially killed but still living' or 'disappeared and cremated' somewhere, with hundreds of unaccounted bodies floating through Punjab's rivers and canals, keeps reverberating and pricking the Punjabi consciousness.

### Official commemoration

The residence of the late Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, has since been turned into a 'National Museum', her blood-soiled clothes preserved as important items on display, presumably depicting her sacrifice for the country – a meaning that many Sikhs would find difficult to stomach. Obviously, regardless of her role, commemorating the highest office holder of the land is the state's compulsion. Thus, Delhi's main civil aviation airport is now called Indira Gandhi International Airport. Indira Gandhi's name is also appended to the National Centre of Performing Arts and India's Open University, besides numerous other places and charities.

The Indian government also undertook a selective rehabilitation of Sikh leaders. Harchand Singh Longowal – once charged with waging war against the state – was given recognition after he was slain by a militant outfit. At the first anniversary of his death in 1986, a stamp was issued and a federally funded technical college was established at Longowal. Gradually, others were also given space. A portrait of Master Tara Singh and Maharajah Ranjit Singh now graces the Indian parliament. This recognition was due to canvassing by Tarlochan Singh, Chairman of the Minorities Commission, who argued that the state should try to reduce Sikhs' alienation from the 'mainstream' Indian national life.

A major development which has ameliorated much of the Sikhs' collective anger against the Indian government was the elevation of Manmohan Singh as a Sikh prime minister in 2004. Manmohan Singh, an Oxford-educated economist, has a clean

image as an honest and able administrator that has elevated the depressed self-esteem and weakened the strong feelings of alienation felt by most Sikhs. Besides offering a public apology for the 1984 events, his government has announced a more generous grant for victims of anti-Sikh riots, accepting the major recommendations of the Nanavati Commission.<sup>54</sup>

## The Sikhs' predicament

Because there can be no repair of the crime, forgiveness is impossible.<sup>55</sup> It is instructive to recast George Steiner's phrase 'we who came after' regarding Sikhs' predicament in the wake of the June 1984 tragedy. The first concerns the state of Sikh theology after the *Ghallughara*. How could one look at the condition of Sikh theology, its language in the light of 1984 with the same eyes as before? How have individuals coped with the broken ideals and institutions of their faith? What are the possible choices for individuals caught up in such catastrophes? A creative Sikh writer, for instance, could retreat into the private domain, wander into the galaxy of unempowered Sikh past that is part of an imagined multi-spiritual Indian civilisation.<sup>56</sup> But for a generation of Sikhs exposed to brutalities of the state power, what option do they have? In defeat, they could perhaps be excused for shedding their cultural baggage en masse if the current trends towards clean-shaving among the baptised Sikh families, the rise of Bhangra as an escapade, and a determined and almost suicidal flight from Punjab, alongside narcissistic pursuits, drugs and alcoholism, are any indications.

In the absence of any serious exploration in the social sciences, one can only indicate such an agenda for the future. Drawing a parallel between the Jewish case and the current predicament of the Sikhs, one has to ask whether it possible to speak of God, of a 'Sikh God', after 1984? The Sikh theology carries the notion of God as a benevolent figure, the protector of the weak, and a carer of those without power, an imperial spiritual authority over earthly kings? Why could such a god not protect his own house? What about the Sikh theology of brotherhood, pity and humanity? Can such theology have any other meaning unless converted into powerful institutions, say of a Sikh state with some hope of its implementation? Can any theology have meaning without empowering its pious expressions?

The second issue concerns the nature of Sikhs' forced and voluntary retreat from the public sphere. The state's oppressive measures alone have not led to the victims' silence. The absence of any systematic collection of various forms of protests, petitions and civil cases and appeals by or on behalf of victims throws crucial light on the state of Sikhs' civic institutions and also of its intellectual elite. That none have deemed it necessary to publish their memoirs except some vetted accounts by administrators, police and army generals, points as much to callousness and almost criminal neglect on the part of fellow Sikhs.<sup>57</sup> Consider, for example, the fact that the SGPC could not publish its promised reply to the White Paper until after twelve years. Prepared by Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon, a Punjab University don, its disappointing contents drew mostly from newspaper cuttings. This could not even provide a full list of persons killed within the Golden Temple complex during June 1984. Its silence on the role of various Sikh leaders was as revealing as its mere assertions



through second-hand quotations of 'injustices against brave Punjabis'. The explanation for the tragedy was entirely taken out of the hands of survivors or the community leaders. Compared with the state, the community had no power. Its powerlessness was plainly evident through its resort to its traditional base of power, the Akal Takhat, inevitably dragging it into disrepute.

The third issue concerns theories of forgetfulness. Is there a concept of Sikh forgetfulness or forgiveness? If there is, is it in any way related to the ever-optimistic attitude known as *Chardi Kala*, commonly lauded as a Sikh virtue? Or is this a psychological palliative for a community with few resources to 'edit its recent past with a soothing narrative'?<sup>58</sup> Is there some lesson from the earlier catastrophe of 1947, which also has few Sikh memoirs? The partition tragedy also generated no systematic collection of victims' stories, except an odd plaque in the Golden Temple, a partisan catalogue of 'crimes against Hindus and Sikhs' issued by the SGPC and two or three badly preserved handwritten manuscripts in the Khalsa College Library, Amritsar. But above all, no memorial commemorating thousands who perished in a communal frenzy. Moreover, what is to be made of a perverse show at Wagah for the new citizens of India and Pakistan where they witness the national flag-lowering ceremony by troopers with aggressive shrieks and fierce faces?

A further issue concerns the place of violence in the community's memory and historical legacy.<sup>59</sup> The oft-quoted couplet from Guru Gobind Singh's *Zafarnama* comes to mind here: 'it is legitimate to take up the sword when all other means have failed'. This couplet poses a serious challenge to Sikh theologians with policy implications, though again it is doubtful if current scholarship can match its urgency.

It is a general observation that a trauma forces the restructuring of an individual's goals by unhinging all that has gone before. Certainly the fallout of the 1984 tragedy was so for the community as well as thousands of individual Sikhs. For individuals, retracing their lives after such a trauma is a daunting task in the absence of scant literature. But for the community as a whole, some kind of restructuring can, and has, taken place although this was partly an adverse consequence of the sheer scale of violence perpetrated by the state. For some non-Sikh writers this level of violence was justified insofar as it would teach the Sikhs once and for all their 'rightful place' in India.<sup>60</sup> If such was the aim of the Indian state's 'spectacular use of force', lessons have been well-learned by Akali Dal leaders. The party has not only abandoned all the demands which had formed a stable plank for the last two decades, but several of its senior leaders made confessions of their 'mistake' and how the community had, for a decade, 'gone astray'.

Since the 1990s, the Akali Dal has forged a political alliance with the BJP, a predominant Hindu organisation, and formed a provincial government from 1997 to 2002. Despite the BJP being the leading party at the federal level, with Atal Bihari Vajpayee as Prime Minister, the Akali Dal raised no past issue, much less the thorny issue of provincial autonomy.

The traumatic conditions of the community in the aftermath of 1984 also posed serious challenges to the Sikh elite, its academics in particular. V. S. Naipaul has rightly complained of a lack of Sikh intellectual tradition. For Naipaul, the Sikh community seems to have been guided by a 'medieval outlook'. The 1984 crisis brought this perilously home. Accused by the state in many specific ways, the elite could fall back upon no articulated heritage to ride the crisis, and no concerted efforts by

concerned scholars were forthcoming either as critical analysis of the crisis or in rebuttal of outrageous charges. Despite the expansion of the Sikh elite through three universities and other establishments in Punjab, systematic schools of thought have not yet been devised. Not surprisingly, Punjabi Sikh academics have responded with charges of 'heresy' whenever serious contributions to the debate have appeared.

At the critical juncture of June 1984, the main reaction to the crisis was a characteristically peasant rebellion. Emerging dissidents and militants could draw on no other tradition than the past 'heroic tradition'. For militants the choice was limited to the thoughts of Bhindranwale, who had left no legacy other than an adamant rhetorical resistance recorded on audio tapes. Needless to say, Bhindranwale's rhetoric amounted to little more than a set of incoherent assertions unable to convince a literate world. Notwithstanding the government's effort to portray him as an ideologue of Khalistan, the Sant had exhibited marked ambivalence towards such a demand. Although the critical event so shocked the Sikh sentiments as to legitimise the cry for an independent state, the demand itself had no legacy other than wild dreams of a fringe led by the muddled writings of Kapur Singh, a civil servant who was for a while a member of parliament, and an author of the Anandpur Sahib resolution.

The dilemma of Sikh intellectuals can be illustrated by Khushwant Singh's career, his convictions and reaction to the 1984 tragedy. An unusual Sikh of independent means and a self-declared agnostic, Khushwant Singh has projected himself as the true voice of the community and its Nostradamus. As a member of India's Upper House of Parliament, he daringly questioned the government's justification for sending armies into the Golden Temple. He squarely blamed both 'narrow-minded Akali leaders on the one side, and the deliberately mischievous politics of the central government' on the other (Singh 1992). However, writing in more leisurely times, he had argued for a Sikh homeland where the Khalsa traditions could be preserved.<sup>61</sup> Although hurt by the 1984 tragedy, he felt that the Sikh community's future lay in India where, 'with a Sikh Prime Minister and a Sikh army chief of staff, the shadow of 1984 can now truly be forgotten'.<sup>62</sup>

K. P. S. Gill, the retired Punjab police chief and architect of dismantling militancy, has offered his own diagnosis of the 'greatest moral crisis' facing the Sikh faith whose 'essential universalism, humanism, and dynamism' is under attack by the emerging patterns of both secular and religious politics in the state. He argues that to portray Sikhs as a discriminated minority will lead to tragic consequences:

Unfortunately the very people who were responsible for the genesis of the tragedy in Punjab still have a vested interest in keeping these wounds alive; in reinforcing the image of the Sikhs as a victim community to provide a self-perpetuating justification for retaliatory violence; in recreating the ghetto mentality that will allow these leaders to consolidate their power over the Panth and the state.<sup>63</sup>

Instead of adopting a 'narrow cultural identity', Gill advises Sikhs to study the Sikh scriptures only to discover 'that the entire spirit of gurdwara politics militates against the teachings of the gurus'. His 'going back to basics' advice has come from several quarters – among them, two notable Sikh intellectuals, Surjit Hans and Gurbhagat Singh, who argued that the Sikh Gurus' political message is one

of seeking 'good governance'.<sup>64</sup> Significantly, the Sikh historian J. S. Grewal has argued that the Khalistan issue emerged seriously only due to the state's actions of 'Operation Bluestar, anti-Sikh riots and Operation Woodrose'. Grewal argues that the main political party, the Akali Dal, never gave the issue of Khalistan a platform.<sup>65</sup> Several other writers have also been at pains to prove the community's loyalty and sacrifices for India by parading figures of Sikhs' share of prisoners, number of hanged and other sufferers under the colonial rule, while tracing the community's historical evolution as 'defenders of Hindustan'. Yet other studies by political scientists who belong to a university which takes its name from the founder of Sikhism have exposed the 'flimsy claims of Sikh nationalism' and offered analyses of the fracturous nature of Sikh identity. Arguing that the 'correct' approach to the 1984 tragedy lies in the 'class composition' of the Punjabi Sikh community, one of these studies has tried to show how 'grass root reality' was quite different. Riven by caste and political factions, it argues, the Sikh militant movement was nothing short of terrorism and thuggery.<sup>66</sup> That the Sikhs' predicament at least partly arises from the post-colonial state's agenda of a highly integrated and centralised economy and society is not posed at all. Nor is there any mention of how a visible minority was and could be held to ransom by a manipulative federal leader's desire to gain electoral popularity.

Sikh academics have yet to address the crucial issues of why the post-colonial Indian state has treated assertive minorities as burdensome legacies of imperial rule. What are the options for a minority community in such a regime traumatised both by the partition of 1947 and by 1984? Is there any scope for symbolic and material expressions for 'provincial nationalism' in a country which is struggling to mould memories and cultures of its diverse peoples into the uniform code of a reproducible narrative? Thus, a systematic analysis of the Sikhs' predicament is yet to begin, indeed may never begin given the state of Sikh Studies at Punjab's universities and the calibre of its elite. Confounded by state patronage, with no material base of independent thinking, and easily led either into leftist idealism or back to an outdated 'Sikh theology', the Sikh elite face the peculiar crisis of 'serving two masters' in contemporary India. Connected with this issue is the criterion of allocation of federal funds for regional studies and the system of grants for Punjab Studies, especially those of its distinct history, social formations and cultural studies. Perhaps the Sikh diasporic elite can assume a more significant role detached from the compulsions of Punjab's academics.<sup>67</sup>

Meanwhile more pragmatic answers are needed for re-educating Punjab's politicians and bureaucrats for playing safe games in cases where federal leaders are compelled by electoral considerations to stamp down upon a minority community. Alternative means and ways of safeguarding the linguistic, cultural and religious ideals of a community in an Indian federal polity which has fast reduced provinces into mere municipalities need serious analysis. Different strategies of economic and social development of Punjab than those dictated by the Indian federal governments need exploration. The wealth of diaspora Sikhs, their attachment to Punjab, together with the new wave of globalisation easing authoritarian and the centralising state's stranglehold on Punjab, raise at least a glimmer of hope.

Wisely, perhaps, many of the Sikh elite have withdrawn from the public sphere. Rather than devoting energies to recovering and challenging the power of the state to coerce and de-legitimize a community's institutional and ideological framework and



play a positive role in laying the bases for an alternative and counter-hegemonic discourse, the Sikh elite have preferred the safety of silence. Indeed, it is doubtful if they have a capability of constituting 'another public culture, a set of institutions incommensurable in many ways with those of the state'.<sup>68</sup> For the Sikh elite or for the community, the arrival of a dynamic or insurgent moment of nationalism is beyond their capacity:

When this series of spaces is ideally constitutive of subjects rather than merely restorative of subjectivity that have been destroyed by the state terror is no longer practically retrievable, however powerfully they might be summoned.  
(Lloyd 2000, 215)

Herman has argued about the necessity of social movements that challenge the common sense of the state in order to create the conditions for a recovery from trauma:

To hold traumatic reality in consciousness requires a social context which affirms and protects the victim, yet joins victim and witness in a common alliance. For the larger society, the social context is created by political movements that give voice to the dis-empowered.<sup>69</sup>

Enforced by the federal state, and later abetted by the Akali Dal who spearheaded the community into the tragedy, it seems unlikely that an 'emergence of a national community which can provide for its subjects the paradoxical safety of public acknowledgement'<sup>70</sup> is a possibility for the Sikhs. Thus, parallel to what therapists call 'spaces of safety' in order to recall and re-articulate victims' memory of state terror and violence, the Sikhs have been unable to create any 'spaces of safety'. For as yet, there are a few whose voices were suppressed by militants and the government alike.<sup>71</sup> Nor are many civic organisations collecting, preserving and using such testimonies in defence of victims. Indeed, some who lined up to seek justice from governmental agencies, petitioned various human rights commissions or appealed to diasporic Sikh organisations have either regretted this action or somehow dare not publish their accounts. No voices from the underground, just silence or the silence of many graveyards, to be more precise.

The only recourse, in the short term, is perhaps a cry in the wilderness over the lost ideals of a faith, of the psychological damage to the Sikh as a moral person. With no public space to express private sorrows, the pain of damaged or demolished institutions, the Sikh subject could perhaps share the pretence of normality by white-washing as much of its history-carrying monuments as has been done across the Golden Temple complex by its administrators since June 1984. Followers of Nanak could re-contextualise his *bani* for the current predicament:

As I cry  
Cry with me the whole world  
Birds of jungle cry with me  
Still, my anguished beloved remains aloof,  
Nor does he relent<sup>72</sup>

Meanwhile enforced and voluntary silences continue. Theodor Adorno, noting effects produced by poetic renderings on unspeakable events, observed 'that writing poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric'. Sikh poets have responded to the tragedy with different sensitivities. Armed with typically banal leftist ideology, a Panjabi poet equates 'two tyrants' of the tragedy:

None will name a new-born child after them  
Two tyrants of Punjab tragedy: Bhindranwale and Gandhi  
No, there won't be any monuments to their dastardly deeds  
None will remember them  
We shall celebrate Punjab's shared heritage.<sup>73</sup>

As we have seen, the state has many monuments to commemorate the Indian Prime Minister, while Bhindranwale's portrait is yet to find space in a Sikh museum. Harinder Singh Mahboob, another poet, appealed to the tenth Guru in seeking an answer to the community's predicament:

Unmanned are our rivers for long  
As if you hardly cared  
Blood has flown through the Satluj  
What does it speak to you?  
For us, lost in fate's powerful swirl  
With untold misery and unforsaken  
Confronted by men who own countries  
Where are thee, oh our protector?  
Come and guide us, Kalghidhar!  
For, homeless we remain  
Bereft of land to call our own.<sup>74</sup>

In the meantime, the third *Ghallughara* has swept away a community's many ambiguous and almost innocent options of the pre-1984 period. While the contest goes on for forging a coherent narrative of the event, the dilemma for the Sikh community looks more grave with each passing year. Several individuals' muted voices and dangerous trajectories only remind others to remain silent. After 1984, the optimism of the Sikh mind expressed through *Chardhi kala* seems just an exercise in self-deception. *What a morning after!* It is not at all a comfortable position to arrive at. Alternative intellectual or material means of counter-hegemonic discourse to come to terms with the post-1984 'morning after' are nowhere in sight. And in Wittgenstein's sense,<sup>75</sup> it is now virtually impossible to think and talk of the event, much less look in the face of its consequential resolutions.

## Notes

- 1 This article was presented for the conference on 'Remembering and Forgetting: Memory and Trauma in Recent Sikh and Punjabi Experience', Hofstra University, New York, 2004. I am grateful to Dr Arvind Mandair for various suggestions and

stylistic improvements to this article. Needless to add that I am responsible for any remaining errors.

- 2 Hassner (2002).
- 3 *Ardas*, the prayer, is a reminder of the community's struggles, its survival against odds, an affirmation and reminder of its history and ethics. While much of this prayer became standard from the eighteenth century, references to sacrifices during and after two *Ghallugharas* were perhaps adopted under Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. The reminder about Nankana Sahib's loss and prayer for *darshan* and its upkeep by the Sikh Panth is a post-1947 addition.
- 4 The battle of the Golden Temple became the subject of numerous books. Among these, an insider's account is Kirpal Singh (2001); see also Brar (1993); Harminder Kaur (1990). Most of these studies are reviewed in Tatla and Talbot (1995). For documents leading to the Akali Dal's demands and conflict with the federal government, see Gurmit Singh (1989–91).
- 5 Madanjit Kaur (1983).
- 6 Madanjit Kaur (1991). See also *idem* (1988).
- 7 The White Paper (Government of India [1984]), 169–170, lists casualties as follows, dividing them into civilians and army along with ammunition recovered up to 30 June 1984:

	Golden Temple	Other religious places	Other areas	Total
1. Civilian/terrorist casualties				
[a] Killed	493	23	38	554
[b] Injured	86	14	21	121
2. Army casualties				
[a] Killed				
[i] Officers	4	—	—	4
[ii] Junior commissioned officers	4	—	—	4
[iii] Ordinary ranks	75	1	8	84
[b] Injured				
[i] Officers	12	3	—	15
[ii] Junior commissioned officers	17	2	—	19
[iii] Ordinary ranks	220	19	14	253
3. Civilian/terrorist apprehensions	1,592	796	2,324	4,712

- 8 Tully (1985).
- 9 Commenting upon Sikh soldiers' desertion, General Sunderji said, 'it was basically command failure . . . coupled with this was the enormous emotional psychological pressure which our Sikh troops [mostly raw recruits] were under at that point of time, something which no other class of troops had been through' (Bhullar 1987, 81). On the other hand, A. S. Vaidya, chief of the army staff, in his broadcast to the nation on 1 July 1984 warned of severe punishment for all deserters.
- 10 Herman (1992), 33.
- 11 Lloyd (2000). As Gramsci points out, a major aspect of hegemony is control over 'common sense' — that is, the body of doxa that regulates what passes for sense in any public sphere. See Gramsci (1971).



- 12 Harbhajan Singh (n.d.).
- 13 Khushwant Singh (1992), 59–61.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 75.
- 15 Auden (1940).
- 16 See Pritam Singh's article in Amrik Singh (1985).
- 17 Tully (1985).
- 18 Government of India (1984).
- 19 Text of broadcast of 2 June 1984 by Mrs Indira Gandhi appears in the White Paper (Government of India 1984), 105–09.
- 20 Khushwant Singh (1992), 60.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 60–61 '(I mention this specifically and other incidents that have taken place giving rise to the complaint that the Golden Temple has become a sanctuary for criminals.) It is, Mr Home Minister, your word and your government's word against the word of the Akali leaders. They deny that criminals are getting sanctuary in these temples. (I emphasise this point because I suspect you are trying to create a situation to provide justification for the police to enter the Golden Temple.) It will lead to a blood-bath in the Punjab' (58).
- 22 See, for example, the article by Lt. Gen. Jagjit Singh Arora in Kaur and Shourie (1984).
- 23 Kshitish (1985).
- 24 Khushwant Singh (1992), 101.
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 *Ibid.*, 101.
- 27 Government of India (1984), 163–4.
- 28 For a more thorough review of Bhindranwale's speeches, see Judge (2005).
- 29 Joshi (1984).
- 30 Ribeiro (1998), 359.
- 31 Physicians for Human Rights (1994), 20.
- 32 Sandhu and Vinayak (1992).
- 33 Axel (2001); Mahmood (1996).
- 34 Government of India (1984).
- 35 These cliché's usually derive from a *janamsakhi* wherein Guru Nanak is assumed to have commented on a village which did not welcome him by saying, 'let these village residents remained settled', as against the next village whose residents welcomed him, by saying, 'let these people be scattered.' The moral of the story is that those who have done a good deed are blessed to disperse (from Punjab) – so the self-illusion of emigrating goes! The second cliché' which serves for some as a justification for settlement outside Punjab actually derives from scripture, in this case from Asa di Var: *jithe jaye bahe mera satguru so than suhaava ram raje*.
- 36 Tatla (1999). Amnesty International published three reports on human rights violation in Punjab. It also publicised the case of Harjit Singh, a victim of 'forced disappearances'.
- 37 *Jabai baan lagyn hai, tabai ros jagyan*, Guru Gobind Singh, Bachitar Natak, Dasam Granth.
- 38 Sarab Jit Singh (2002).
- 39 Birinder Pal Singh (2002); Ribeiro (1998). 'In terrorism of the nationalist variety, emotions play a predominant role in the things ... Young men fed with talks of injustice and the heroism of their co-religionists offer themselves for the cause.

- The lure of adventure, loot, even of martyrdom, attracts others ... Innocent people were dying in the hundreds. Their wives and children had become widows and orphans ... This was the way of Punjab in a war of this type, combatants on both sides were bound to lose lives ... this was tribal territory, with tribal customs and propensities, who was I to pass judgement on?' (Ribeiro 1998, 345).
- 40 This reference is from the Sikh *ardas*: '*gurdwarian lai kurbania kitian ...*' See also Manraj Grewal (2004).
- 41 Jaijee (1999).
- 42 *Punjab in crisis* (1991), 5–7.
- 43 Sarab Jit Singh (2002), 299.
- 44 Physicians for Human Rights (1994), 2.
- 45 Kanwar Sandhu, *India Today*, 15 October 1992, 31.
- 46 For texts of *hukamnamas*, see Rup Singh (2003). Buta Singh was excommunicated on 2 September 1984.
- 47 Khushwant Singh (1992), 142.
- 48 Nabhewalian Bibian, a group of women singers, recorded several songs which gained popularity in the immediate aftermath of June 1984. Also see Pettigrew (1992).
- 49 Avtar Singh Makar, President of SGPC, announced a portrait of Bhindranwale for the Sikh Museum in January 2006.
- 50 *Tribune*, 5 March 2006.
- 51 Jaijee (1999), 315–18. *Tribune*, 17 September 1998. The Punjab government, headed by Akali Dal chief, Parkash Singh Badal, besides blocking its work by ordering non-cooperation by government officers, also filed an appeal in the High Court.
- 52 The National Human Rights Commission could only take up cases no more than a year old. As to the use of the PHRC, it is difficult to imagine that several SGPC members could apply to it seeking protection during the SGPC elections as the battle raged between Tohra and Badal factions!
- 53 *Hindustan Times*, *Tribune*, 24–26 February 2006. *Tribune*, 12 March 2006.
- 54 Horlock (2004); People's Union for Civil Liberties (1984). Since 1985 four commissions have submitted their report on anti-Sikh riots in Delhi. The Nanavati Commission submitted its report in 2005. Maximum compensation was raised to Rs. 250,000. The Punjab government has devised its policies to rehabilitate riot-affected victims who had migrated from other parts of India.
- 55 Steiner (1967).
- 56 See Harbhajan Singh's later poetry in *Rishi te Manukh*.
- 57 On 23 March 2004, Gurcharan Singh Tohra passed away just a few months after his election as the president of SGPC. A fortnight before his death, he was also elected to the Upper House of Parliament. According to his colleague, a leading newspaper offered to publish his memoirs, but the Akali leader found one excuse or another for dodging this task. His colleague thought this refusal was mainly due to his memoirs being 'too painful'. Of the 1984 tragedy's key witnesses, Parkash Singh Badal, Surjit Singh Barnala, Harkishan Singh Surjeet are now all approaching their 80s and are unlikely to record their memoirs. Barnala has already sketched a brief and rather insipid account in *Quest for Freedom: story of an escape* (Barnala 2000).
- 58 Quoted from Pitafo (1990), 159–60.
- 59 Juergensmeyer (1993, 1988); Nandy (1990).

- 60 Kothari (1989); Jeffrey (1994); Narayan (n.d.).
- 61 Khushwant Singh (1966), 302–05. He concluded: 'A student of Sikh affairs may indulge in speculation on the course of the two movements to which attention has been drawn in the preceding pages viz Sikh resistance to being absorbed by Hinduism and the movement for a Sikh state. The two are more intimately related to each other than is generally realised or admitted'. In the revised edition which spanned the 1984 events, he felt satisfied with the formation of a Punjabi-speaking state in 1966 as 'all one could ask reasonably in a secular India'.
- 62 Khushwant Singh (2006).
- 63 Gill (1997), 138–9.
- 64 Hans (1986); Gurbhagat Singh (1993).
- 65 J. S. Grewal (1994), 227; *idem* (2005), 295–334.
- 66 Puri *et al.* (1999).
- 67 In North America various Sikh Studies chair holders are signalling the arrival of a new elite, with appropriate studies being published or promised in the near future. See, for example, new publications by Pashaura Singh, Harjot Oberoi, G. S. Mann, Arvind Mandair and Gurharpal Singh. Two journals, the *Journal of Punjab Studies* (Santa Barbara: University of California) and *Sikh Formations* (London: Routledge), are embryonic of this development. As a model of new exploration, see Gurharpal Singh (2000).
- 68 Lloyd (2000), 215.
- 69 Herman (1992), 9.
- 70 Lloyd (2000), 215
- 71 For a few exceptions, see: Ram (2002); Kaura (1999); Manraj Grewal (2004).
- 72 Guru Nanak, *Guru Granth: Wadhans*, 558.
- 73 A poem by Amarjit Chandan, a Panjabi poet based in London.
- 74 Mehboob (1988).
- 75 Wittgenstein (1961).

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